

# U.S. suspects firm of illegal river dumping

By Jane Hadley  
P-I Reporter

The federal government is investigating a Seattle cement company for suspected illegal dumping of hazardous waste into the Duwamish River, according to court documents filed yesterday.

Special agents of the Environmental Protection Agency seized evidence Wednesday night at the Pioneer Construction Materials plant, also known as Glacier Sand and Gravel Co., at 5975 E. Marginal Way S. near the First Avenue South Bridge.

No formal charges have been filed. The company declined comment.

The firm has been discharging highly corrosive cement wastes into Slip 2 of the river, according to an affidavit filed by a deputy U. S. marshal in support of a request for a criminal search warrant.

The affidavit said the company is suspected of violating the federal Clean Water Act, the federal hazardous waste management act and the Rivers and Harbors Act.

## A tie to EPA

Pioneer, which is a division of Riedel International Inc., of Portland, referred all calls yesterday to the Portland office. An official in the legal department there said the company would have no comment.

Riedel holds stock in Riedel Environmental Technologies Inc., a firm that deals in emergency environmental cleanups for the EPA.

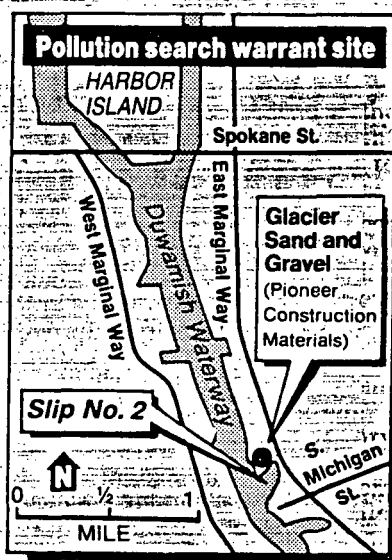
According to the affidavit, the discharges have been observed both by EPA special agents and members of a boating class. The affidavit said Special Agent Gerd Hattwig, the observers have taken photographs and video tape recordings of the discharges.

The federal investigation began in May, shortly after the state Department of Ecology had inspected the facility. Richard Koch, a state inspector, observed wastes running off the surface of the property toward the river and warned the company it would need a permit for any discharges into the river, the affidavit said.

But Pioneer plant manager Ron Summers told Koch the company does not routinely discharge into the river and would need no permit, the affidavit said. A few days later, Koch sent Summers a letter, a permit application and instructions, informing Summer that a permit is required for any discharges into the river.

Summers told Koch in a May 12 telephone conversation the company does not discharge wastes and would not apply for a permit, the affidavit said.

On June 13, investigators took water samples where the alleged discharges enter the river. The samples, which would have been more diluted than the actual



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discharge, were found to contain waste that is hazardous, based on criteria of the federal hazardous waste management act.

All had a pH of at least 12.5, which the affidavit said indicated "extreme alkalinity . . . sufficient to cause skin burns and certainly to kill various forms of aquatic life." The pH scale runs from 0 (very acid) to 14 (very alkaline).

Hattwig said cement trucks that return each evening to the facility are washed out on a cement pad. The area around the pad drains into trenches and concrete holding ponds, which apparently either overflow or are purposely drained through pipes onto the embankment adjoining the Duwamish, Hattwig said.

The special agent said he has "on numerous occasions" observed "a steady stream of concrete waste waters" coming out of a concealed pipe in a wall along Slip 2 and then flowing down an earth embankment into the river.

The accepted methods of disposing of cement truck wastes involve either recycling them or neutralizing them with acids, Hattwig said.

## Dyes used

The company has no permit and would never be issued a permit for the hazardous wastes it is suspected of discharging, Hattwig said.

During the search of the property, agents ran tracer dyes through the drain system, a federal official said yesterday.

Riedel International is "a significant stockholder" in Riedel Environmental Technologies, said Andrew Franklin, president of Riedel Environmental Technologies.

Riedel Environmental Technologies performs emergency environmental cleanups under a "continuing" contract with the EPA, Franklin said.

Under the provisions of the Clean Water Act, a company convicted of violating the criminal provisions of the act can be barred from further contracts with the agency, a lawyer for the EPA said.

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